

I Samuel

Lesson 28 - Chapter 16 and 17

Last week in 1st Samuel 16 we saw young David, son of Yishai (Jesse) anointed by Samuel, but the narrator is careful NOT to say that David was anointed “king over Israel”. It was probably not entirely clear to David’s family (and whoever else was in attendance) just what the anointing ceremony was intended to accomplish. There is no hint than anyone but Samuel (and Yehoveh who sent him) knew what an enormous event had just transpired.

It is interesting that while one name is often used by many Bible characters we don’t ever see the name David duplicated. In Hebrew it is **Dawid**, but because it is an unusual name the Sages don’t entirely agree on its meaning. I won’t go into all the suggestions but the one that is most generally agreed upon is that it means, “beloved”. What’s important for us to grasp in our time is that much had been made that no ancient artifact bearing the name **Dawid** had ever been found in Israel, but somewhat recently there have been a couple of finds that refers to him. Probably the most important one is known as the Victory Stele that was uncovered in Tel Dan (the far north of Israel) that speaks very plainly of the “house of **Dawid**” Some have tried to claim that this might be referring to another and different “house of **Dawid**” but not the David of the Bible (or better, David’s dynasty), but that is a rather implausible stretch because **Dawid** was such a rare name in Israel and the stele specifically refers to Israel, Judah, and speaks of the “house of David” as being the royal house. It can be no other than the Biblical King David.

We find that the Bible speaks of 3 separate occasions when David was anointed: the first time was here when Samuel anointed him as **nagid**, king in waiting. Although the passage (verse 13) where the anointing happens doesn’t specifically say “king in waiting”, it is made evident earlier in verse 1 that Samuel was sent to the family of Jesse in Bethlehem to do just that.

The second anointing would be performed by the leaders of Judah for David “to be a king over the House of Judah”, and it is recorded in 2nd Samuel 2:4. The third time he would be anointed by the elders of Israel to be a “king over Israel” as recorded in 2nd Samuel 5:3. A king over Judah and a king over Israel are by no means the same thing.

I make this point at this time because while the Bible contains many mysteries, the reasons that some things happened as they did are quite apparent and we don’t have to wonder. We have learned enough of the history and regional politics of that era to see that now was NOT the moment for Samuel to announce David as the new king (because Saul was still firmly entrenched on the throne and he had the full backing of the northern tribes). Further that since the Israelites’ loyalties were divided between the northern tribes led by Ephraim (and their king was Saul), and the southern tribes led by Judah (who only tacitly acknowledged Saul); it was completely logical that David’s own tribe (Judah) would be the first to wholeheartedly accept him as their king. Only after David was king of the south (King of Judah) was he in any position to consolidate his power; but first King Saul had to die so that the throne became vacant and a

power struggle over the leadership of the northern tribes would ensue. In this way, under David, the north and the south would become united into one sovereign nation called Israel.

Thus when in 2nd Samuel 5:3 we read that David was anointed by the elders of Israel to be king over Israel, what that really meant was that David was accepted by the leaders of the northern tribes who had formerly given their loyalty to Saul (David had already been anointed some time earlier by the southern tribes). This is why we'll find that David knew he immediately had to search for a neutral site to make his capital city (which turned out to be Jerusalem), otherwise he'd be seen as favoring one tribal coalition over the other and he wouldn't be viewed as the legitimate and even-handed king over ALL 12 tribes.

We also need to go forward in the all-important context that the Spirit of Yehoveh had departed from King Saul. And this Holy Spirit was not only the source of power and enlightenment for God's earthly governor it was also the spirit of a sound mind. Thus we read that since God's Spirit had left Saul it was instantly replaced with another kind of Spirit that caused evil to befall the king. And the principle that we see so clearly on display here is that there is no such thing as a human whose soul is not occupied with a supernatural spiritual influence. This supernatural influence is either going to be for good or for evil; this influence will either cause good to flow or evil to run amok (there is no middle ground and there is no such thing as a spiritual equivalent of Switzerland). In turn we are informed that the Holy Spirit of good that was taken from Sha'ul now fell upon David.

Let's pick up at verse 13.

RE-READ 1ST SAMUEL 16:13 – end

The effects of the Lord departing from Saul, and of the spiritual influence that caused evil replacing it, were physically evident and clearly observable and those who were closest to him couldn't help but notice. It is interesting that the one who seemed to be oblivious to the effects of it all was Sha'ul himself. Oh, he no doubt recognized when he was feeling especially agitated, melancholy, depressed, and irrationally angry but he didn't seem to recognize **why**. Just as he never could seem to make the leap of faith by connecting the presence of Yehoveh with his own personal behavior and decisions and thus creating a personal relationship with the Lord, now he couldn't seem to make the connection between his emotional and intellectual deterioration and the absence of Yehoveh. But (terrifying as it is for us to contemplate) in some ways whether he realized it or not, or finally made that connection or not, no longer mattered; his earthly and eternal future had already been set in stone. His name had been removed from the Book of Life. God judged him with the result that Saul would forever remain cut-off from Yehoveh.

All that was left was for some kind of earthly salve to be applied to Saul's tormented mind to give him some relief; and his closest advisors suggested that music might be a good medicine. Most Bibles (such as the CJB) will translate the Hebrew word **ebed** as servants, but in this context it is not referring to menial laborers who suggested the prescription of music, but to his royal court. Why music? It was a combination of a superstition and an observed reality that indeed music has an inherent quality that "can soothe the savage breast".

All ancient societies used music to fight demons and Saul's advisors were fully aware (as the passage makes note) that the underlying cause of the king's depression and fits of rage was a spirit (that seemed to come and go) that caused evil. So they recommended finding a suitable musician who could magically exorcize whatever demon or spirit that brought forth evil that was hounding him and thus provide some relief for their king. In fact when we look closer at the Hebrew in verse 15 we find that it is said that this spirit from Yehoveh is **ba'ath Sha'ul**; the spirit is terrorizing Saul (some Bibles correctly translate it this way).

The king agrees to allow his court to find such a musician and one fellow says he knows of just the man for the job: one of the son's of Jesse the Bethlehemite. He describes the musician as a brave soldier who chooses his words carefully and is pleasant looking. All of this information is important both for King Saul and for us, the future readers of this story. First is that since David will by definition have such intimate proximity to the king and necessarily be aware of his mental and emotional state (especially when it's at its worst), then he'll have to be of an appropriately refined and trustworthy type. The family of Yishai is part of the ruling class of Judah so David fits the bill in that regard. But David is also a superb player of the lyre, has the right kind of pleasant appearance, and is properly educated so he can speak well. Although it doesn't occur to Saul, these are also the same kinds of attributes that are expected of a king.

So King Saul sends a messenger to Yishai summoning David. Jesse (being wise in the ways of power and protocol) of course complies and along with David sends a donkey laden with bread, wine, and a young goat as a gift. Jesse fully understands the tremendous opportunity of his son having the king's ear. David immediately ingratiated himself to King Saul and so the king took a liking to him. In fact King Saul declared David to be his armor-bearer.

Now an armor-bearer is not exactly how it might seem to us. We picture as armor-bearer as a soldier who carries his bosses' armor in servant fashion. An armor-bearer was actually more the title given for a certain official office than it was the descriptions of a task. By no means does the title indicate that an armor-bearer was one who carried the king's military gear (although some probably did). The effect of such a privileged title gave David a position of prestige and no small amount of authority. It was usual for kings and potentates to have numerous armor-bearers and in fact in 2nd Samuel 18:15 we learn that Joab had 10 men holding that title, and no doubt they each served separate governmental functions for him in his administration. So David was an armor-bearer whose function was as the court musician who played-away the king's foul moods.

Before we move to chapter 17, I want to clear up something that modern liberal scholars at times completely pervert (for reasons of an obvious politically correct agenda). In verse 21 we find it said that Sha'ul "loved" David. Our CJB says "greatly liked", but that is not accurate. In fact the original Hebrew says that Saul **ahab** David (**ahab** is Hebrew for love). The liberal innuendo is that there was a homosexual relationship going on here, and later on also between Jonathon and David. Well, that's just sheer nonsense. It doesn't take a very in-depth historical and linguistic study of the Bible and the Biblical era to learn that **ahab** is not about an erotic affection between two people. In the sense used here it means to greatly accept or to bring near as a trusted person. We find that "love" is commonly used to describe a king-vassal relationship. So the term "love" (**ahab**) was a common part of Middle Eastern political language

to describe a person close to the throne or who had royal favor and it had no sexual overtones whatsoever.

Let's open our Bibles and read chapter 17, which contains one of the most well-known and often told stories enjoyed by children and adults. This is a very long chapter, but we're going to read it from beginning to end so as to not lose any context.

Depending on which Bible translation you are using, you may find that this chapter does not contain several verses that I'll be reading to you; and as a result the verse numbers will be different and fewer. I'll explain that situation right after we read chapter 17.

READ 1ST SAMUEL CHAPTER 17 all

This chapter is somewhat controversial, and the nature of the controversy is best demonstrated when we notice that the Greek Septuagint's version of this chapter lacks nearly half of the verses that are found in the Hebrew Masoretic Text version. Specifically, the Septuagint does not include verses 12-31, nor verses 41, 48, 50, and 55-58. There are many academic speculations on this conundrum. One is that the Septuagint is correct, and someone later added verses to the Masoretic Text. Another is that the Masoretic Text is correct and several verses were omitted (for some unknown reason) from the Septuagint. Whichever is factual, the REASON for such a discrepancy is also disputed. Some say that this story of David and Goliath is a rather sloppy blending of two separate traditions about this incident into one. Others say that it is not a blending of two traditions but rather it is that the Septuagint (that is the oldest extant version of the Holy Scriptures in existence, even older than the Dead Sea Scrolls) is the older and represents one tradition, and the Masoretic Text (the Hebrew Bible from the 9th or 10th centuries A.D.) is a newer and different tradition.

I have no reasonable means of arguing this one way or the other. What I will say is that from a theological standpoint there is no disagreement that the lack of, or addition of, these verses causes. Mostly it's just about some extended details surrounding the confrontation between the Israelites and the Philistines and who was there. When present these verses add to the color of the story; when absent no context or valuable information is lost.

That said, at the end of the story the presence of verses 55-58 are troublesome and seems to be inconsistent with earlier parts of the story. It may merely be a storytelling style that confuses, or it is that some later editor added these verses for some unknown reason. We'll deal specifically with those verses when we get to them.

The first few verses of chapter 17 set the scene for the battle between David and Goliath. It seems that the ever-present Philistines had again gathered their strength and (probably emboldened by the knowledge that Saul was a king in decline and susceptible to irrational behavior) moved into Israelite territory. Since their territory was generally contiguous to the southern and central tribal areas of Canaan, it's of no surprise that we find them setting up battle lines in Judah.

The place the Philistines chose was strategically important. The Valley of Elah (*elah* means

Oak or Terebinth) was a natural highway into the hill country of Judah, proceeding through the coastal plains of Canaan, the Shephelah, from the Philistine homeland. If the Philistines could control this valley they could move large amounts of troops and supplies rather easily (something that Israel simply couldn't allow to happen).

The two cities or villages of Socoh and Azekah were listed in the book of Joshua as being located in the lowlands of Judah, so the modern day village of Khirbet Shuwiekeh is almost certainly the right location. It is a popular tourist destination for pilgrims to Israel and having been there a few times I can tell you that it is a good place to read this story and make it come alive. The valley there is large, flat and almost like a plain between two mountain ranges, with a river bed that flows more or less through its center like a stripe running along the back of a snake.

The valley plain separated the two armies: the Philistines occupying the hills on one side, Saul's army of militia on the other. Each side was sizing up the other, and neither was too sure of what the outcome might be if a battle broke out (a battle that was inevitable).

Something needed to happen to break the paralysis of the situation so suddenly a giant of a man emerges from the Philistine camp and he begins shouting challenges at the trembling Israelite soldiers. The giant's name was **Golyat** (Goliath) who hailed from Gath, one of the famous 5 Philistine stronghold cities together known in scholarly circles as the Pentapolis. This man was enormously tall. The Hebrew texts say he was 6 cubits plus a span. A cubit is about 18 inches, and a span about 9 inches (which approximates the distance from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger of a spread hand). Thus if the calculation is correct **Golyat** stood 9 feet 9 inches tall.

This height was just too extreme for some early Hebrew scholars in Alexandria, Egypt to accept so they arbitrarily lowered the number to 4 cubits plus a span, which then makes Goliath a more believable (at least to them) 6 feet 9 inches. These were the scholars who (around 250 BC) translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek and created the Septuagint. So if your Bible has the measurement of 4 cubits, then your translation follows the English rendition of the Septuagint.

In an era when the average height of a man hovered around 5 feet, a man almost 7 feet tall indeed was a giant. But there is no reason for us to accept that lower number. There are many reliable historical records of men who grew to Goliath's height and even a bit more. Philo and Josephus both have recorded the existence of men in their time that they personally knew of and were well over 9 feet tall. We have records of a man named John Middleton who lived during the 1600's near Liverpool, England and he was reported to be about 9 and one-half feet tall, and a German fellow called the uncle of Iren who lived in the middle 1800's who was reported to be slightly over 10 feet tall.

The thing is that the city of Gath was especially known as a place where remnants of that race of giants called the Anakim lived (not fee-fie-foe-fum giants, merely very tall men who were fierce and fearsome warriors).

^{CJB} **Joshua 11:22** *No 'Anakim were left in the land of the people of Isra'el- only in 'Azah, Gat and Ashdod did some remain.*

In other words, at this time the only known remaining Anakim were living amongst the Philistines so it would have come as no great surprise to the Israelites to run into one of them here at the Valley of Elah. However just the sight of this enormous human being kept the Israelite soldiers hiding among the rocks and clinging to them for protection like Geckos. In order to give us the visual impact that Goliath had on Saul's soldiers, we're told that he wore a bronze helmet on that huge noggin', and also wore a special kind of bronze armor that alone weighed well over 100 pounds. The armor is more precisely defined as scale-armor. That is, it was created like shingles on a roof; individual bronze plates overlapped the ones next to them to keep out arrows and the blows of swords. This is as opposed to what later came to be called a suit of mail, which were small bronze loops strung tightly together that permitted body armor with more flexibility and considerably less weight. We actually have a pretty good idea of what Goliath's scale-armor looked like because in reliefs created by the Assyrians we see their charioteers wearing it.

His weapons weren't terribly advanced; they were just scary-huge. The wooden shaft of his spear is said to be the size of a weaver's beam (a beam used to construct a loom), and the iron spearhead alone weighed 15 pounds. Who could carry such an implement of war, let alone throw it for any distance?

He also wore protective anklets and carried a scimitar slung across his back. A scimitar is a curved sword with the sharp edge located along the outside of the curve. This in time became a very traditional weapon used in the Orient.

Thus we find that except for his face, Goliath's entire body was protected. The point is that from a purely physical, earthly standpoint this man could not possibly be beaten by some puny 5 foot tall Israelite soldier. He had every advantage; size, strength, iron weapons, and confidence. So Goliath came out into the valley plain and called up to the shivering Israelites. He asked them (more or less rhetorically) if they really WANTED to come out and fight the Philistines. After all while Goliath is a professional soldier in the professional and experienced Philistine army, he points out that they are just "slaves" of King Saul. In other words, they aren't trained warriors and they aren't being paid for their services. They are Hebrew farmers, herdsmen, tradesmen and merchants for the most part. So Goliath gives them an alternative that was actually fairly usual (generally since warfare itself has existed). He says why not make it a battle of one Philistine (himself) against one Israelite; a battle of surrogates? Their best man against the Hebrews' best man. The bargain was that only one soldier need lose his life and the army of the defeated soldier side would voluntarily submit to the winning Champion. Obviously Goliath was not only rather certain that no one would challenge him, but that if anyone was foolish enough to volunteer the encounter would be a short one.

As verse 11 explains, there were no takers. The mere thought of it frightened the Israelite troops all the more (which was Goliath's intent). Of course even if Goliath weren't there, the Israelites knew they were at a disadvantage because the Philistines were an overwhelming military force with the most advanced iron weaponry and largest contingent of Chariots known

in that era. From all human aspects, the defeat of Israel was certain.

Here at verse 12 begins about 20 consecutive verses that are the bulk of the ones that are excluded from the Septuagint. We immediately run into a term that we've confronted before, "Efrati". We've seen it in a number of forms such as, "Efrath of Judah", and "Efratah of Bethlehem". The term seems to indicate a class of people more than a family or a clan. And the class is the well-to-do. Another way to say it is, "the fruitful". Apparently this kind of class identification fit Yishai's family, including David (Jesse's youngest). Here we again see the issue of how many sons Jesse has pop up, as it says that there were 8 but in other passages it says 7 (we covered that extensively last week if you want to review it).

Yishai is said to be an old man, which means that his eldest sons were probably in late middle age. Saying Yishai was old is not just a throw-away statement; its here to explain why he wasn't present for the battle (he had reached an age whereby he was exempt from military commitments). So here we find that David's brothers Eliav, Avinadav and Shammah were all present to face the Philistines as Jesse's family contribution to the war effort. We don't know David's age at this time, but he was a man and not a child. Likely he was in his late-teens at the youngest. David still seemed to be in charge of his father's sheep, and so he would tend to the flocks for a time and then he'd go to King Sha'ul (probably when summoned) to perform his duties as the court musician.

Verse 16 supplies the information that every day for 40 days Goliath climbed down to the valley between to the two forces and shouted his challenge to the non-responsive Israelite soldiers for 40 days. We should pay attention to the number of days being 40. The number 40 holds particular significance in the Bible and refers to a precise number, not just a long period of time. There are at least ten instances in the Old Testament and New Testament where 40 occurs, either in years or days, e.g. it rained for 40 days and 40 nights, Moses was on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights, the Israelites wandered 40 years, Yeshua fasted in the wilderness for 40 days and was seen on the earth for 40 days after His crucifixion.

A 40-something time period (whether that "something" is days, months, or years) is *ALWAYS* a period of testing, trial, probation, or chastisement (but not judgment) and ends with a period of restoration, revival or renewal.

The number 40 represents a pattern in the bible and shows us that God is consistent, so the meaning of a number in Genesis remains the same all the way to the book of Revelation. Sometimes the spiritual significance is not revealed directly, but in the case of "40" and its many examples throughout the Bible, we can be certain of its importance and significance and it's of course no different in the story of David and Goliath.

We'll continue in that story the next time we meet.